

OFFICE OF THE BOARD OF SELECTMEN

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*Jennifer Thomas, Chairman
Bruce Spinney III, Vice Chair
Sargon Hanna, Clerk
Craig Dauphinais
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November 3, 2016

Laura Shufelt
Community Assistance Manager
Mass Housing Partnership
160 Federal Street
Boston, MA 02110

Dear Ms. Shufelt:

On November 1, 2016, the Board of Selectmen held a regularly scheduled meeting to discuss the request for a determination of Project Eligibility from Prentice Place, LLC for a 54-residential rental unit housing project located at 23 Prentice Street. The Board, relying on comments submitted from various town departments and the Planning Board, concluded that the project as currently proposed should not move forward based on the significant impacts to immediate abutters and to the town. While the Town recognizes and supports the need to bring affordable housing to Grafton, this project raises very serious concerns for the Board as indicated by the critical points listed below.

- **Parking:** The Zoning Bylaw requires 2.25 spaces per dwelling unit (Sec 4.2.2 Multi-family) resulting in the need for 122 spaces. The plan proposes 84 parking spaces, about 1.56 spaces per unit. The Town does not believe the on-site parking will be sufficient for residents or visitors. Overflow parking for the development will not be permitted on Prentice Street due to the configuration and traffic on the street or across the street at Nelson Park since there is no surface parking available and parking directly on the park will become a maintenance issue for the town.
- **Traffic Impacts:** The Town will require that there be a traffic study to be conducted for this project. While the Town's primary concern is for the intersection of Prentice Street and Shrewsbury Street (Route 140), the Town is also concerned about the visibility from

Prentice onto Creeper Hill Road and the impact the development will have on the existing congestion issues on North Main Street (Route 140) at Westboro Road (Route 30).

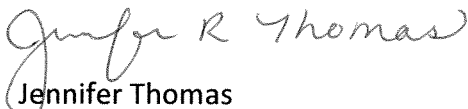
- **Snow Storage:** The plan for this project does not designate snow storage areas. While the Applicant stated to Town Staff that they will identify snow storage locations on plans that are submitted at time of application to the Zoning Board of Appeals, an examination of the site plan leads the town to conclude snow storage will be minimal. Lack of adequate snow storage will impede emergency vehicles and endanger residents and responders.
- **Emergency Access:** The project has no second means of access, requiring emergency responders and fire apparatuses to back-up to exit the site. Plan revision submissions must demonstrate how emergency vehicles can turn around. The Fire Dept. also noted that the curbing on the inside curve of the driveway needs to be mountable to reduce damage to vehicle tires.
- **Trash Removal:** The plan for the project does not indicate a location for trash removal. A rental development of this size would require a single dumpster area, further exasperating the lack of snow storage and constrained internal circulation.
- **Stormwater:** The plan for the project contains no usable open space as it is primarily occupied by a surface drainage system. Alternative designs should be used to allow retaining some existing trees and usable lawn space. Because the proposed drainage system includes an overflow to the Town's drainage system in Prentice Street and Shrewsbury Street, these systems should be examined to determine their capacity and condition since their repair and/or replacement would be costly and time consuming for the Town.
- **Fire Suppression:** Town Staff stated the State Building Code requires the development to be sprinklered.
- **Unit Addresses:** The Police Chief stated each unit should be easily identifiable for emergency responders.
- **Sewer:** Sewer Dept. Staff stated the Applicant will be responsible for the extension of municipal sewer needed to serve the development.
- **Buffer:** The plan indicates that the buildings are between 17 feet and 15 feet off the rear property lines of adjacent residential properties. The plan did not include a proposed screening plan and the narrowness of the areas available for screening will be inadequate to screen three story buildings.
- **Architecture:** The design of the units is not in keeping with the surrounding area of North Grafton. The Applicant should incorporate design elements from the surrounding historic

structures into their project. In addition, the Applicant should consider modifications to the design of the buildings to reduce their mass and height.

- Evacuation Plans: The project is located in close proximity to the Grafton-Upton Railroad propane storage facility. An evacuation plan will be required for the development in the event of a disaster at the propane facility. This particular concern is directly related to the ability for emergency vehicles to access the development.
- Financial Impacts: The Town has financial concerns regarding the school budget and potential increase in students due to the number of units at the development. The number of potential students added to the District will cost two thirds more than the tax revenue brought in through the development of the units.

The Town recognizes the property owner's right to develop land. The Town also recognizes and supports the goal of increasing the supply of affordable housing as established in its 2013 Housing Production Plan. However, the Town, as documented by comments received by Staff, Board and Committee Members, and residents, cannot support the project as currently proposed. The Board of Selectmen believes that the onsite and offsite impacts are directly related to the density of the development. The Board objects to this project proposal as it is presented and anticipates that the project proponent will work with the Town to decrease the number of units proposed and bring much needed rental housing to town.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jennifer R. Thomas".

Jennifer Thomas

Chair, Board of Selectmen

cc: Dan Hill
Zoning Board of Appeals
Affordable Housing Trust